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EAST VALLEY • SCOTTSDALE

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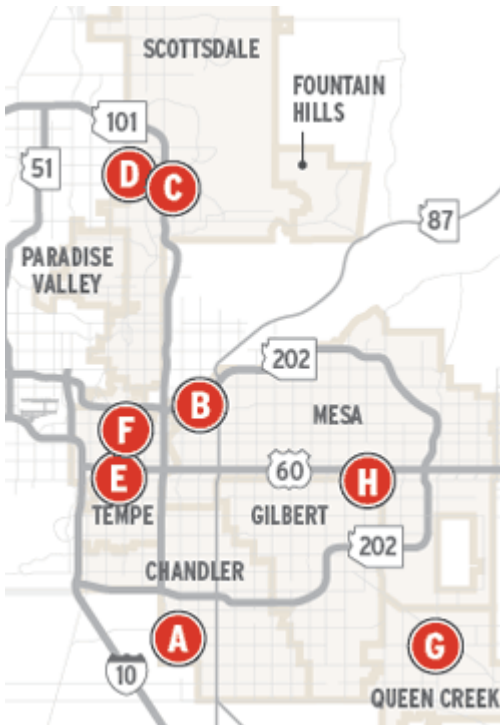
Getting There: MAG issues stimulus wish list

By Mike Branom
Tribune

"Maybe the South Mountain Freeway will get built after all." That was my first thought after learning the proposed economic stimulus package from the incoming Obama administration would be heavy on infrastructure improvements.

And this is a heavy package to begin - \$1 trillion isn't out of the question.

It's basic Keynesian economics, and works like this: The federal government funds the projects the states, counties and municipalities can't fund for themselves; money goes to suppliers (and their employees) plus contractors (and their employees); and then they pump that money back into the economy.



East Valley road work update

Will it work? Dunno. But here's a saying I learned during my days as a sports writer: That's why we play the games.

On Friday, the Maricopa Association of Governments released the wish list put together by the state, county and cities. For a collective price tag of \$6.8 billion, there are 706 projects ready to go.

And ready to go is the key, which explains why one of those projects is not the South Mountain Freeway.

Because the economy needs help now now now, a stimulus package works only if the money is spent immediately. MAG's list divides projects into three categories for how soon construction could begin after the receipt of federal funds: 30 to 120 days, 121 days to six months and after six months.

People have been arguing about the South Mountain Freeway for more than 20 years; I doubt anyone believes an answer will be found by next summer.

But forget about what won't be built; what's on the list is staggering.

For \$150 million, how about bridges over the Salt River at Gilbert and McKellips roads? A streetcar running down Mill Avenue sounds cool, even if it costs \$255 million. I've never been to the intersection of Pecos and Power roads, but Gilbert believes it needs \$12.1 million in improvements. Queen Creek wants money for wider roads; Valley Metro wants money for a pair of transit centers in Chandler.

A quick glance through the list (www.mag.maricopa.gov/main/download.asp?item=9615) shows Mesa

A. Dobson Road at Germann Road

Restrictions on northbound Dobson and westbound Germann end Friday.

B. Alma School Road between Hackamore Street and Gary Street


Restrictions on Alma School

would benefit from the priciest request, as Metro light rail wants \$290 million to extend its tracks from the Sycamore station through downtown to Horne.

How many of these projects, if any, will be built? Again, dunno. But consider this is only one county's requests. Add in the rest of Arizona's counties, multiply by 50 states ... and that's a whole lot of people with their hands out coming to the federal government.

But until someone tells us "No," it's fun to dream.



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